

Salter, the proprietor of Don's Coffee House, mentions two dances well known to folk dancers. He explains that beside shaving and tooth drawing, "Don Saltero," as Steele calls him, played on the violin and

" . . . if he would wholly give himself up to the string, instead of playing twenty beginnings to tunes, he might, before he dies, play *Roger de Caubly* quite out. I heard him go through his whole round, and indeed he does play the *Merry Christ Church Bells* pretty justly."

Pepys, the indefatigable Pepys, furnishes us with an interesting allusion. He apparently was acquainted with Playford, for under the date of November 22, 1662, he says

"This day I bought the book of country dances against my wife's woman Goswell comes, who dances finely; and there meeting Mr. Playford, he did me his Latin songe of Mr. Deering's, which he lately printed."

And the entry in his *Diary* for December 31, 1662, must not be omitted. He is describing a royal ball.

" . . . and thence into the room where the ball was to be, crammed with fine ladies, the greatest of the Court. By and by, comes the King and Queen (Charles II and Catherine), the Duke (Buckingham) and Duchess, and all the great ones: and after seating themselves, the King takes out the Duchess of York, and the Duke, the Duchess of Buckingham; the Duke of Monmouth my Lady Castlemaine: and so other lords other ladies; and they danced the Brantle. After that, the King led a lady a single Coranto, and then the rest of the lords, one after another, other ladies; very noble it was, and a great pleasure to see. Then to *country dances*; the King leading the first, which he called for; which was, says he, *Cockolds all awry*, the old dance of England . . . Having staid as long as I thought fit, to my infinite content, it being the greatest pleasure I could wish now to see at Court, I went home, leaving them dancing."

Now, *Cockolds all awry* appears in Playford as *Cuckolds All a Row* and Sharp prints it in *The Country Dance Book* under its alternative title of *Hey, Boys, Up we go*, the name of a partisan ballad with which the melody became later associated, and which was very popular with the Cavaliers.

These examples could be indefinitely continued, but I hope I have shown that English teachers may find both pleasure and profit in investigating this most interesting subject.

In several of our large cities there are already branches of the English Folk Dance Society, whose purpose is to disseminate a knowledge of English Folk Songs and Dances, and to encourage the practise of them. Other centers are being organized, and teachers who are so fortunately located as to be able to associate themselves with one, will find that it is well worth while. To them I extend the invitation of Milton's pupil and nephew, Edward Philips, who wrote in *The Mysteries of Love and Eloquence, or the Arts of Wooing and Complimenting*:

"Ladies, will you be pleased to dance a country dance or two for 'tis that which makes you truly sociable and us truly happy; being like the chorus of a song where all the parts sing together."

MILTON M. SMITH

## II

### GRADING BY THE GROUP, OR GENERAL MERIT, SYSTEM VS. GRADING BY PER- CENTAGES

At the regular monthly meeting in November of the Harrisonburg Educational Association, comprised of teachers of the public schools and the State Normal School, the topic for discussion was the so-called rational, or scientific, system of grading. Sufficient interest was aroused to continue the study of the matter and a committee was appointed to report at the December meeting.

This committee made a careful investigation of the situation in the schools concerned, and reported in detail upon it, advocating the rational system. The net result was that the Normal School faculty at its next regular meeting voted to adopt the system and the teachers of the local public schools began studying and graphing their own grades in the effort to bring about the desired uniformity. However the committee thought it best in supplementing the data referred to above, to find out the current practises, and sent a questionnaire to a hundred schools of higher education, including forty normal schools and sixty colleges and universities. The tabulated results of this questionnaire were of such general interest that it was thought that other



schools contemplating a change from former methods might care to have them for study.

Of the hundred schools, which were chosen at random, replies were received from 58, no follow-up letters being sent. To the writer's surprise the answers grouped themselves as follows: 13 normal schools and 34 colleges and universities replied favorably and 7 normal schools and 4 colleges and universities replied unfavorably, as to having adopted the system; in other words of the 58 schools reporting, 80 per cent have the system in use in some form or other. This indicates very rapid progress in the past ten years and suggests that in all probability a majority of institutions of higher education, at least of the first rank, are now using this system instead of the once universal system of grading by percentages.

#### SUMMARY OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONNAIRE

1. *When did your school change from the percentage basis (0-100) to the rational or group system of marking?*

Numerical answers in terms of numbers of years since adoption were as follows: for normal schools; 25, 11, 11, 9, 7, 7, 4, 3; for colleges and universities; 35, 25, 20, 15, 11, 9, 9, 8, 7, 7, 7, 7, 5, 4, 4, 4, 4, 1, 1, 1, 1. Of these thirty schools, the median number of years is 7 and the range of the middle 50 per cent is seen to be from 4 to 9 years. Probably the few early dates represent some modified form of the present scientific effort to correct the evils of the old system.

2. (a) *What passing grades are given at the present time?* (b) *What interpretation do you place upon each and (c) what percentage of students do you expect to fall within each group? e. g. A, excellent, 6 per cent; B, very good, 15 per cent?*

3. *What other grades do you use and what is the interpretation of each? e. g. F, failure, 3 per cent, etc?*

In the questionnaire a tabular form was drawn up for ease in reporting items (a), (b) and (c) and this very much facilitated both in the answering of the questionnaire and the tabulation of the answers. By far the large majority of schools reporting have in use a system of four passing steps, A, B, C, and D, or 1, 2, 3, and 4 and either one failure step, or one condition and one failure step. A few schools have three passing steps; which seems to be a doubtful practise, because it tends

to make the value of A and even B less significant. One school has a carefully worked out plan of ten steps. A number of schools have some form of evaluating the different passing grades, as, for example, counting A three points, B two points, etc., thereby giving credit for quality of work done.

Not all schools which have adopted the rational system have determined upon a standard percentage of students which might be expected to attain such grades. With a few there is evidently the desire to wait until practise shall have been sufficient to give some guidance in making a decision, while with others it is felt that the adoption of the system is all that is desirable and feasible. The table below indicates the practise of twenty-five schools in this matter. Where a figure appears midway between the columns of the table, it is because it covers both grades, that is, in the case of School *a* the ruling is that approximately 25 per cent shall receive A and B and similarly 25 per cent shall receive D, E, and F. Schools *a—g* are normal schools and schools *h—y* are colleges and universities.

STANDARD PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS REGARDED AS LIKELY TO RECEIVE THE DIFFERENT GRADES

School Key	A	Passing B	Grades C	D	Condition E	Failure F
a.	...	.25....	50	.....	.25.....	
b.	.....	.25....	50	.....	.25.....	
c.	5	20	58	11	5	1
d.	0-6	15-21	45-55	20-28		0-10
e.	7	18	50	18		7
f.	10	50	25	12	.....	.3.....
g.	8-15	20-24	40-42	18-25	.....	4-15.....
h.	10	20	40	20	.....	.10.....
i.	15	35	35	15	.....	0-20.....
j.	5	20	50	20	.....	.15.....
k.	8-12	30-40	25-35	12-18	.....	8-12.....
l.	5	20	50	20	.....	.5.....
m.	10	20	35	25	.....	.10.....
n.	5	20	50	.....	.25.....	
o.	12-15	34-37	37-39	9-12		
p.	.....	.25....	50	.....	.25.....	
q.	0-6	20-30	40-50	15-20	.....	0-6.....
r.	10	20-25	40-50	15-20	.....	.5-20.....
s.	7	20	45	20		8
t.	10	20	40	20	.....	.10.....
u.	10	15	50	15		10
v.	3	22	50	15-22	.....	.3-10.....
w.	15	35	35	.....	.15.....	
x.	.....	.33....	33	.....	.33.....	
y.	5	20	50	20		5



One notes at once rather wide diversity of practise. Apparently schools *c, g, k* and *o* report either a standard based on practise or an actual distribution of grades. Other schools not listed above are studying the distribution term by term and reporting in the hope of finding a working standard later. Numerous answers indicate a feeling that too great rigidity at this point is unfortunate and several suggested that the standard applies only to "large classes" or "classes over a period of years." In a few schools provision is made for a different percentage for elective courses from that for required courses. There is a positive danger in this practise in that, while the distinction is undoubtedly to be made, its statement may result in breaking down the important principle that classes for special groups and upper classmen should offer relatively more difficulty.

In most cases the schools reported in the table incline to a distribution in general harmony with the normal frequency curve. Any school will not go far wrong, judging from these figures, in setting 5 per cent to 10 per cent as the standard for A, 15 per cent to 25 per cent for B, 40 per cent to 50 per cent for C, 15 per cent to 25 per cent for D and 5 per cent to 10 per cent for E (conditioned) and F (failure). It may be that some special conditions, such as high entrance standards, unusual degree of professional interest of students or a large amount of eliminative selection, might warrant some skewing of the distribution toward the A group and that other factors of an opposite nature might warrant skewing toward the E and F groups. There is considerable advantage in agreeing upon a range such as is indicated in the case of schools *d, g, q* and *r*.

4. *How well does experience justify the standard percentages suggested above (questions 2 and 3)? Are you contemplating any change?*

Answers to this question threw little light upon this general problem, most schools reporting that the system is on the whole satisfactory and that no change is contemplated. Of the 11 schools reporting the old percentage system for grading as practise, 3 report having the rational system under consideration, 2 report that the matter has been up for discussion repeatedly and 2 report having changed back to the percentage system. A number of answers bear out the conclusions drawn from

the answers to question 1, in that the system is in too experimental a stage for definite revision as yet. A number note the fact that certain teachers persist in high grading, particularly in the B group, or that there is undesirably wide divergence even with the system.

5. *For what purpose, if any, has it been found necessary or important to have a numerical equivalent for the grades, e.g. A equals 90 per cent to 100 per cent, B equals 80 per cent to 90 per cent?*

In this matter the normal schools apparently have a different problem from that of the colleges and universities, as five report the necessity of such interpretation for the State boards. In fact one school similarly notes that school officials base their selection of teachers upon numerical grades and that it has abandoned the rational system because of this. But one college reports this problem and that for an out-of-the-state State Board of Education. Five schools report the use of numerical equivalents for deciding honors, scholarships and the like; three schools report their use in the matter of the transfer of credits and one for the averaging of marks of teachers who co-operate in conducting a given course. Reference is made in several answers to the fact that teachers are allowed to use the percentages in their class-books. Extreme positions are taken in this matter, one writer stating that numerical grades are a help to the young instructor who is getting used to the system, and another stating his position as follows: "To express letter grades in percentages is most vicious. You can't have both. If the percentages are used, the letter grades are never used with the right interpretation." The latter position is probably more nearly correct, as there is much danger of adopting the system in name only.

A number of schools made no reply to this question, while others took the position that the numerical equivalent was never needed. One of the normal schools meets the practical situation referred to above by having prepared a rubber stamp as follows: A-Excellent % equiv. 93; B-Commendable % equiv. 87, etc. This device should be used sparingly and only by the registrar or some similar official. Few if any schools apparently report the grade percentages to students in addition to the letters, and a number of schools have regulations forbidding this.



6. *What means, if any, are used to bring and keep the faculty in line with these recommended grade-groupings?*

A number of schools apparently have gone no further than to pass legislation. However, in approximately half the schools using the system, reports of the grades are made to the faculty annually, indicating the use of the system either by individual teachers or by departments. Several schools attain similar results by occasional reports of committees. In still others the matter is left to discussions which are held frequently and at set times. The advantage of the committee report or the statistical table of grades which can be placed in the hands of each member of the faculty cannot be doubted. It serves to assist new members, to refresh the matter to old members of the faculty and to render far more likely the desired degree of uniformity of grading.

One of the greatest obstacles in the adoption of the rational system has often been the fear of pressure which might be brought to bear upon members of the faculty. The answers to this question show no tendency in this direction, two schools reporting in addition to the methods noted above that conferences are held by the President with members of the faculty individually in cases of wide variance from the expected practise. One of these two schools offers the only real exception to the general tendency to place and leave responsibility with the individual teacher, for in instructions to the faculty accompanying a report of grades, the percentage basis of distribution is referred to as "the prescribed system of grading" while the phrase "as many A's (or B's, etc) as the law allows" is frequently scattered through the report. Granted that there may be justification for this in the case of this particular school, it should be stated that such effort to dominate the individual members of the faculty is bound to be obnoxious and therefore to react unfavorably upon the system. American schools are to be congratulated that this instance is so isolated.

7. *What are the most worthy ends that you believe the system is serving in your school?*

A few in answering this question were inclined to speak frankly their views of the general failures and shortcomings of grading in general but on the whole the answers were of

great value and were given in some detail, affording the best index available as to the reasons for the progress which the system has made.

Of the forty-four answers given to this question, exactly one half were to the effect that grading through this system is better standardized and more uniform. Four held that it removes the intense and undesirable rivalry for grades; four, that it tends to raise the standard of and interest in scholarship; three that it tends to call attention to individual differences of students; three, that it does greater justice to the better students; two, that it forms a basis for estimating students' general ability to a larger extent. Single answers were given as follows: greater intelligibility to students, highest degree of accuracy possible, more honest marks and, last but not least, the education of the faculty.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Any conclusions which may be drawn from this study rest upon the presumption that the schools chosen represent a random sampling and that the answers similarly represent a fair sampling of the schools which were written to.

1. Nearly one half of the schools to which the questionnaire was sent have the rational system, indicating a general tendency among higher institutions. That nearly three fourths of these schools report adoptions within the last ten years with the median for all at seven years, shows how recently the tendency has become general and suggests the likelihood that in another period of similar length the traditional percentage method will be as uncommon among the better higher schools as was the rational system fifteen or twenty years ago.

2. It was noted above that 25 schools, or one fourth of the number to which letters were addressed, are refining the literal system of definition in terms of the percentages of students obtaining a given grade. This means acceptance of the fact that the system is based on the normal frequency curve. That a definition in terms of the old percentage basis is so infrequently used is significant. The varied practise in the percentages of grades allowed in different schools shows that these schools are wisely adopting the system with such modification as seems



to take account of the selective agencies at work in their student bodies. (See *School and Society*, vol. VII, pp. 178-180).

3. There is a large degree of unanimity in the answers given as to the purposes served by the system. Such a degree of uniformity as will relieve pressure upon members of a faculty and as will do justice to good students and encourage scholarly effort sums up nearly three fourths of the replies given here. Undoubtedly the matter of the weighting of the various letter grades, or credit for quality, concerning which data was proffered by a few who answered the questionnaire, is a very desirable step in colleges and universities but of less merit in the two-year normal school courses where the demands for specific knowledge and skill tend to limit the number of electives which can be offered.

4. One may venture the guess from the above that two other results are to be expected. The historical tendency of the lower schools to follow the practises of the higher, accentuated by the fact that the teachers who go out from our normal schools and colleges will have been accustomed to the new method, will undoubtedly in the next decade mean the wide adoption of rational, or group, grading in the high school and even in the elementary school. Similarly it is to be hoped and expected that the little entering wedge which has thus been driven by science into the age-long subjective traditional tendencies in educational practise will bear its fruit in other lines of development.

W. J. GIFFORD

#### A GRAY DAY

A gray, gray day—  
The gray rain over all,  
Wet leaves on the pavement,  
Wet leaves on the wall;  
A gray, gray day—  
A nun-like veil of rain,  
The only color in all the gray  
Two bluebirds in the rain.

### III

#### WHAT SHOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED IN ENGLISH IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

It is a very easy matter to say what *should* be done. The difficult part is to find a way to accomplish our purpose. But that we may have a goal on which to fix our eyes, let us see what may be reasonably expected of a child who has had the full English training in an elementary school.

In the first place he should be able to speak correctly in the sense of not making gross errors; to choose his words with some degree of care; to speak in a voice that is to a degree modulated; to speak clearly with the distinct idea of interesting his listeners, and making them hear each word. This does not mean that we shall try to develop trained speakers, but to train pupils to realize the importance of their manner of speaking to people and to make them wish to possess every possible grace in this direction.

This may be begun in the lower grades through story-telling, reading, etc., *done in the right way*. Too often pupils are allowed to speak in a voice too high or too low—allowed to speak in such a way as to be scarcely heard because of poor articulation. Since these are the wonderfully plastic, habit-forming years, we cannot afford to tolerate such conditions.

In the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades the material for developing correctness along these lines can be taken directly from the subject matter. Parallel reading may be given in history—stories about the men who are being studied, incidents of the special time under consideration. In geography, reports may be had from a variety of sources, as general reference books, geographical readers, and even magazines. Pupils enjoy getting up this extra material if given half a chance, and valuable help in the subject matter, as well as on the English side, will result.

In the upper grades a great deal can be done through oral composition, reports on magazine and newspaper articles, etc. Pupils in the seventh and eighth grades take great pride in this work. They wish to interest the class; so they keep their eyes open for interesting material. They are chagrined at making a gross error. They learn quickly the value